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Customizable Soft-Skills Courseware

Resolving Conflict at Work

Improving Workplace Relationships



Instructor Guide

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Instructional design and learning philosophy

We are committed to providing the best core-skills content possible for Instructor-Led Training (ILT). The following principles are applied in the development of programs:

Sound Instructional Design

All course content is developed using a variety of research techniques. These include:

- Brainstorming sessions with target audience
- Library research
- Online research
- Customer research (focus groups, surveys, etc.)
- Subject Matter Experts (SME)
- Interviews with trainers

Expert instructional designers create imaginative and innovative solutions for your training needs through the development of powerful instructional elements. These include:

- Learning objectives — effective tools for managing, monitoring, and evaluating training
- Meaningfulness — connects the topic to the students' past, present, and future
- Appropriate organization of essential ideas — helps students focus on what they need to know in order to learn
- Modeling techniques — demonstrate to students how to act and solve problems
- Active application — the cornerstone to learning — helps students immediately apply what they have learned to a real-life situation
- Consistency — creates consistent instructions and design to help students learn and retain new information
- Accelerated learning techniques — create interactive, hands-on involvement to accommodate different learning styles

Application of Adult Learning Styles

Adults learn best by incorporating their personal experiences with training and by applying what they learn to real-life situations. Our experienced instructional designers incorporate a variety of accelerated learning techniques, role-plays, simulations, discussions, and lectures within each course. This ensures that the learning will appeal to all learning styles and will be retained.

Please note: Only the pages highlighted in yellow below are those featured in this preview.

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PREVIEW

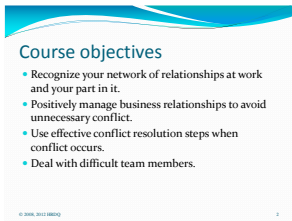
Module One



UNDERSTANDING THE SYSTEM



Review the course objectives.



Relationship building was identified by two recent studies from the Center for Creative Leadership as a key skill for leaders. In addition, a survey by the Center for Creative Leadership found that more than 50 percent of 1,144 managers who completed the survey were rated by an immediate boss as "ineffective at managing conflict." In addition, the ability to "confront others skillfully" was rated as a development need by more than 40 percent of the 7,028 peers and direct reports who provided feedback.

Course objectives

Successful completion of this course will increase your knowledge and ability to:

- ◇ Recognize your network of relationships at work and your part in them
- ◇ Positively manage business relationships to avoid unnecessary conflict
- ◇ Use effective conflict resolution steps when conflict occurs
- ◇ Deal with difficult team members

Introduction

- ◇ All relationships occur in a system
- ◇ Interactions and relationships are interdependent, not independent
- ◇ A change in one part of the system affects other parts

Functional roles

- ◇ Supervisor
 - Ideal: fair, open, motivational
 - Worst case: egotistical, unreasonable, partial/biased
- ◇ Employee you supervise
 - Ideal: dependable self-starter
 - Worst case: lazy, unmotivated or incompetent
- ◇ Team member or coworker
 - Ideal: mutual respect, hardworking, trustworthy, considerate
 - Worst case: competitive, self-centered

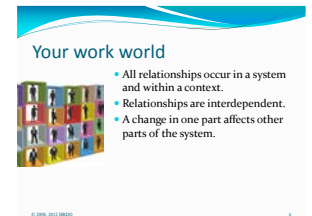
Practical roles

- ◇ Leader
 - Ideal: visionary, inspiring, goal-oriented
 - Worst case: sets a bad example
- ◇ Peer
 - Ideal: equal in praise and blame
 - Worst case: balancing act often difficult for many people
- ◇ Follower
 - Ideal: takes direction well, knows the right questions to ask
 - Worst case: doesn't ask questions or do much work, requires lots of supervision

Here's the good news: You can work with anyone. They may not be your best friend, but you can find a way to work with them.



Your work world consists of a system, or network of relationships. Within that system, you have a supervisor (and their supervisors), team members and/or coworkers, and possibly employees you supervise.



Every system consists of functional roles, i.e., supervisors, coworkers and those you manage (if you are a manager) and practical roles, i.e., leader, peer and follower. Although there is a natural match (see below), this is not always the case in reality. Some peers or employees are leaders, and some supervisors are followers.

Supervisor—leader

Coworker—peer

Employee you supervise—follower

Review each role and the ideal and realistic behaviors for each. Ask participants to think of people they know (personally or in the news) who fit each category. They will draw their own network of relationships shortly.

Participants may ask how being flexible (a point we just emphasized) fits with being consistent. People must make a permanent change in how they interact. Their tactics may change, but the overall strategy (goal) shouldn't change.



Be patient: Progress may be slow (it may take months to see lasting results). Ask yourself: "What can I do next month to further my plan?"

Review the case study to see how Sheila puts these ideas into action.

Follow through and be consistent

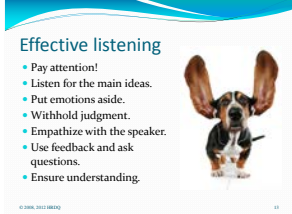
- ◇ Repetition will reinforce the new impressions you want to foster
- ◇ Control your natural impulses (remember, they weren't effective before)
- ◇ Mistakes are costly and can erase recent effort
- ◇ Be patient
 - Ask yourself: "What can I do next month to further my goal?"

Sheila continues asking Chuck for more work during the slack times between crises. She also asks Chuck for priorities, and jokes that she'll hold him to them. She still takes on the crisis work, and does whatever it takes to catch up. She makes sure Chuck and Kathy see her making the extra effort, but she doesn't complain about it.

Sheila's peers begin to see her differently. She volunteers to help Kathy's assistant, Jim, during slack times when Chuck gives her little work. They become friendly enough that they eat lunch together once or twice a week. Kathy hears good things about Sheila from Jim and comments to Chuck about Sheila's improvement.

Sheila finds Chuck responding, after a time. Her regular requests for additional work force Chuck to give her some projects sooner, therefore, she has more time to complete them before the deadline. She holds him to most of the priorities he sets, and he slowly gets used to it. She continues to schedule after-work activities that require her to leave near her scheduled quitting time. She is much happier at work, and thinks she has a decent chance of promotion.

Cover each of the points included on this page.



Remember that it is impossible to listen and talk at the same time. Relax and be attentive.

Listen for the speaker's main ideas. Ask yourself, "What is the speaker getting at?"

Put your emotions aside and be as objective as you possibly can.

Empathize with the speaker. Make a determined effort to see his/her point of view.

Withhold judgment. Allow the speaker to complete his/her thoughts.

Use feedback and questions. Frequently try to check your understanding of what you hear.

Relax and be attentive. By creating a relaxed environment, communications between you and the other person will be more productive.

Activity: This particular activity focuses on paraphrasing, or asking questions and using confirming statements to ensure understanding. Have participants follow the instructions in the workbook. Debrief by asking participants what they learned, and ask them to share any particularly helpful questions they asked. One example, "Do you mean that ...?"

Keys to effective listening

The following will help you become a more active and effective listener:

- ◇ Remember that it is impossible to listen and talk at the same time
- ◇ Listen for the speaker's main ideas
- ◇ Put your emotions aside and be as objective as you possibly can
- ◇ Withhold judgment
- ◇ Empathize with the speaker
- ◇ Use feedback and ask questions
- ◇ Ensure understanding

Activity: Listening practice

Work with a partner. One person will make a general statement such as "I'm creative," or "I like to be organized." The other person will try to understand more fully what the speaker means by asking questions or using confirming statements. To keep the focus on paraphrasing and checking understanding, the speaker should limit his/her answers and not elaborate too much. Allow a few minutes for each speaker to field questions, then switch roles so everyone has a chance to practice being an effective listener.

These are tried-and-true guidelines for running effective meetings. The key is to use them consistently; don't slide and quit using them after a few times.



Meeting ground rules should include standards regarding attendance, preparation, following rules of order and how the team will make decisions (consensus usually brings the best long-term results).

Establish roles and responsibilities: It usually works best to rotate roles among team members.

The leader/facilitator should distribute the agenda in advance.

The recorder should distribute the minutes within 48 hours of the meeting. The minutes should include an action plan stating assignments and deadlines, a tentative agenda for the next meeting. The minutes, or a condensed progress report, should be distributed to interested outsiders.

Enhance cooperation in meetings

The following guidelines have proven to be successful when used consistently.

- ◇ Agree on meeting ground rules
 - Attendance
 - Preparation
 - Rules of order
 - Decision making: Authority, majority, consensus
- ◇ Establish roles and responsibilities
 - Consider rotating roles: Leader/facilitator, recorder, time keeper, participant
 - Distribute agenda in advance
 - Distribute minutes within 48 hours
- ◇ Conclude with an action plan
 - Voluntary assignments for every team member
 - Set agenda for next meeting
 - Record and report team progress to outsiders

Four steps to conflict resolution

Acknowledge the problem

- ◇ Allow each side to explain their perspective
- ◇ Get agreement on what the specific problem/conflict is
- ◇ Encourage each side to use "I" language: **"When ...** (*describe event without exaggeration, labeling, judgment or attribution of motive*) ... **I feel ...** (*describe how event/behavior affects you*) ... **because I ...** (*describe connection you see between the facts you observed and feelings you have*)."

Drain the emotion

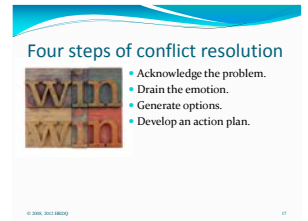
- ◇ Allow each side to vent—take a few minutes to let each person air their thoughts, feelings, frustrations, etc.
- ◇ This does NOT mean either side is allowed to attack, use abusive language or other unacceptable behavior

Generate options

- ◇ Use brainstorming to generate ideas
- ◇ Then, consider the pros and cons of each option and choose the solution that best meets the needs of both sides

Develop an action plan

- ◇ Put the agreement in writing
- ◇ Each side must verbally (and ideally in writing) commit to making the changes necessary to implement the solution
- ◇ Follow up to ensure the agreement/solution is carried out and both sides are satisfied with the resolution



When emotions are running high, it's often helpful to call in a mediator. If you are serving in this role, follow these tips:

1. Clarify your role as a neutral facilitator.
2. Gain agreement to listen openly to each other.
3. Ask each person to tell his or her story about the past, while the other listens without responding.
4. Have each person record new information they hear or realizations they have while listening.
5. Have each person talk directly to the other person about what they learned that helps them understand the other's point of view.
6. Encourage brainstorming to find possible solutions that meet both people's needs.
7. Develop an action plan with small steps to achieve the agreement.
8. Follow up and celebrate success

Practice: Divide participants into groups of three. Explain that they will be doing a role play to practice using the steps of conflict resolution. The role play can be practice in two ways: Either two people dealing directly with each other with an observer, or a mediator dealing with the two parties in conflict. Provide the following scenario

One team member has repeatedly claimed that she didn't receive information that everyone else on the team knows about. Allow five minutes for each group to practice using the steps of conflict resolution.

Coping with rocky relationships

As always, start with yourself.

- ◇ Two words that describe yourself most of the time:

- ◇ Two words that describe yourself when you're getting on someone's nerves:

- ◇ Two words others would use to describe you:

If you are having trouble coming up with words, fill in these blanks.

"People _____ when I _____."

Fill the first blank with an action or response of people around you when you act in a certain way. Example: "People duck into empty offices when I approach."

"_____ makes me feel _____."

Fill the first blank with the response from the first blank of the preceding question, and then answer with the feeling which results. Example: "People ducking into empty offices makes me feel crummy."

"People deal with me _____ when I'm feeling _____."

Fill the second blank with the feeling identified in the preceding question, then answer with how people act towards you when you are feeling that way. Example: "People deal with me by avoiding me when I'm feeling crummy."

Ask participants to think of two words they would use to describe themselves most of the time, and write them in the space provided.

Next, ask participants to write two words they would use to describe themselves on those (rare!) occasions when they might be getting on someone's nerves.

Next, write down two words others would use to describe you in the same situation.

Debrief: Do the words match? If yes, then you have identified your behavior that causes conflict and you can work on it.

If no, you have identified a misunderstanding, which can probably be resolved with better communication.

Compare the words in the first and third bullet—if they match, you have a real problem because the way you behave most of the time gets on people's nerves (joke!).

Fill in the blank activity: Have participants fill in the blanks. Debrief the activity by asking about the example, "Who started this?" The answer, of course, is "me." Participants should now get the point that they control their own actions and thus influence the reactions of the people around them. When they control their own behaviors that trigger adverse reactions in others, they can break the negative cycle.

Course review

1. List the three functional roles in a work system.

2. List the three practical roles in a work system.

3. Which of the following describes an assertive style of behavior?

- a. Adds little input to the system
- b. Positive use of direct communication
- c. Uses intimidation and threats
- d. May be hiding resentment and anger

4. List the six keys for improving business relationships

5. Which of the following is NOT a good basis for changing others' impression of you?

- a. Work on behaviors that can be misinterpreted
- b. Make small changes instead of wholesale large changes
- c. Be flexible in your approach
- d. Stick to your new behavior no matter what

1. Supervisor, employee you supervise and team member or coworker

2. Leader, follower and peer

3. c

4. Practice conscious relationship management, assess the situation objectively, choose your area(s) of focus carefully, analyze your interactions, develop, test and revise your strategy, and follow through and be consistent

5. d

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